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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
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RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS IMMEDIATE
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH IMMEDIATE 0006
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [SCUL](#) [KPAO](#) [SOCI](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: TEXT OF NIGERIAN INFORMATION MINISTER'S MEMORANDUM TO
CABINET COLLEAGUES

REF: ABUJA 0137

1. (SBU) As reported in Reftel, Nigerian Information and Communications Minister Dora Akunyili submitted a memorandum to Cabinet colleagues at the February 3 Federal Executive Council Meeting requesting that President Yar'Adua hand over power to Vice President Goodluck Jonathan as Acting President. She later withdrew the memorandum after receiving orders to do so. The text subsequently appeared in local newspapers, despite a reported order by Secretary to the Government of the Federation Mahmud Yayale Ahmed not to disclose publicly the document's contents.

2. (SBU) U.S. Mission forwards the text of this memorandum, entitled "State of the Nation," which Minister Akunyili forwarded to the Ambassador on February 5, 2010:

Begin Text:

State of the Nation

(1) I want to start my humble submission by stating that I am a 100 percent loyalist of President Yar'Adua. He appointed all of us because he trusts us and wants us to help him to run government effectively and efficiently. Mr. President has given all of us seated in this chamber the opportunity to serve our nation as members of this council. I believe that in the choice of all of us, as individuals and group, Mr. President must have considered our ability to guide him aright to serve our people better, promote and protect the constitution in line with the oath of office taken before him in this chamber by each and every one of us. President Yar'Adua is very dear to me just as he is to all of you.

(2) We are all aware of what has been happening in Nigeria especially as it concerns the issue of making the Vice President an acting President. There have been debates for and against.

(3) Some have argued that there is no vacuum and that it is ok for the Vice President to function as Vice President, not as Acting President pending the return and recovery of Mr. President. For

the proponents of this theory, I want to remind them that Permanent Secretaries had been waiting to be sworn in for over two months now. Consequently, many ministries are without Permanent Secretaries including my ministry. As it is today, the Vice President cannot take any document to National Assembly. In a very desperate situation like the recent Jos crisis, the Vice President deployed troops to Plateau, but many have openly said that he does not have the right because there cannot be two Commanders-in-Chief at a time.

(4) Just recently, Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) has opted out of the amnesty and resumed hostility. They argued that they have been kept in limbo since the President took ill and they appeared to have been abandoned since nobody could talk to them or keep the promise made to them. Our economy is once more being threatened.

(5) The past Chief Justice of the Federation swore in his successor for the first time in the history of our nation. The power vacuum at that level has also compounded our 'poor image' at the international level because of our failure to rise to international expectations, commitments and engagements that require the presence of our President. Many of those opportunities

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have existed in the past 70 days that I do not need to recount. I do not need to repeat the uncomplimentary statements made by United States, United Kingdom and EU concerning the current state of affairs in Nigeria.

(6) There has been persistent agitation by the public for members of the Federal Executive Council to do something. Nigerians expect us to rise to this challenge on behalf of our President as the leader of this administration. Some eminent citizens have spoken. They include former Heads of States and others who have served our nation in various capacities. The Senate has also taken a position of which we are all aware. The looming crisis in the system is over boiling. Our hard earned democracy is being threatened by the day.

(7) What went wrong? We love our President but we should remember that he is not infallible. Before he left Nigeria he had a moral and constitutional obligation to officially inform the Senate and hand over the mantle of leadership to the Vice President pending his return and recovery. That did not happen. Yes, the mistake has been made by our Boss and our brother. Mr. President is ill and did not choose to be sick. But while we continue to pray for his recovery, we should try to right the wrong.

(8) Some have argued that he left the country in a hurry. This argument has been punctured by the fact that he signed the Appropriation Bill for National Assembly. If he could sign the Bill, why did he not sign a letter for Vice President to act on his behalf until he is well enough?

(9) We have a local proverb that says that "A goat does not get strangulated by the rope used in tying it when an adult is present." We are all in a better position to know that the polity is overheated to a frightening level. Posterity will judge us harshly if we do not positively intervene to resolve this logjam.

(10) I wish to call on the Federal Executive Council to act now in

the best interest of our dear President and our dear Nation. We also need to save ourselves from shame because our stand is becoming very embarrassing. He has been away for about 70 days now. Even if he returns tomorrow, is it not better for him to rest and recover before taking over from the Vice President?

(11) We need to do what is morally right and constitutional for the President to officially hand over to the Vice President to function as Acting President.

(12) I am not saying that President Yar'Adua should resign or condemn him for being sick. He did not choose to be sick. We will continue to pray for him, but all I am saying is, let us encourage him do the right thing so that our hard earned democracy will not be truncated. Anybody who feels otherwise is unfair to our President (who has been preaching the rule of law), and utterly unfair to our country.

(13) The name of our President and all his achievements are being rubbished by this unfortunate debacle. The President and his family are also being put under undue pressure which will not help his recovery.

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(14) If we fail to act now, history will not forgive us. I rest my case.

Signed:

Prof. Dora Akunyili

Minister of Information and Communications.

February 3rd, 2010.

End of Text.
SANDERS